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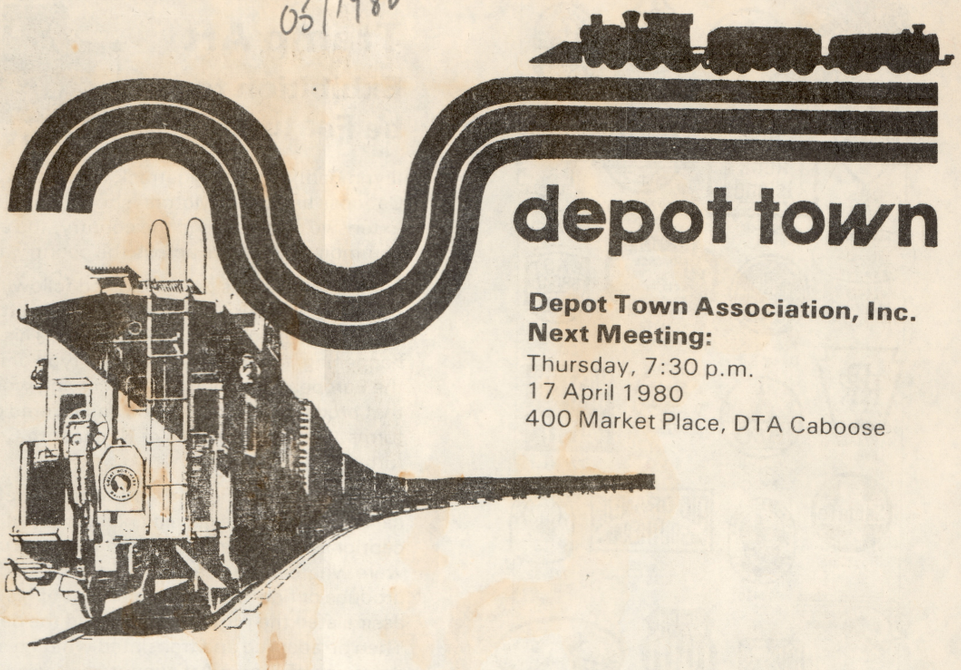


depot town

Depot Town Association, Inc.
Next Meeting:
Thursday, 7:30 p.m.
17 April 1980
400 Market Place, DTA Caboose

Boomer Days to Recall Uniqueness of East Ypsilanti — Depot Town to Lead in Secession Commemoration Boomer Days — May 26-31, 1980

BE a Boomer with your Boomer Book of coupons available all over Depot Town in early May. The coupons will include theme-oriented meals and drinks and other Boomer Bargains throughout the week.

Also included will be a camping permit for the hobo jungle under the Huron River Bridge, — a community dinner of Mulligan Stew for likely-looking local hoboes, — a big band dance (outdoors, if weather permits) and more.

Other May 31 events will include:
- — Farmers' Market Grand Opening
- — DTA Caboose dedication and open house.
- — a rail-walking contest
- — a race: ''The Bum's Rush''
- — Best Boomer Award (by the Historic District Commission.

Intra-City Jealousy Documented

In the 1973 Sesquicentennial Commemorative booklet, Thomas N. Tobias, Jr. made the following observation of ''The First Fifty Years 1823-1873.''

. . . As Ypsilanti grew, two distinct districts — the ''East Side'' and the ''West Side'' — slowly emerged. Both sides boasted prosperous business centers. The East Side had the railroad station, which was never looked upon favorably by the West Side. Meanwhile, the West Side got the Post Office, which was a constant source or irritation to the East Side. Above all, there was always the fear that one side or the other would receive inadequate return for the amount of taxes it paid into the village treasury.

By the 1850's, jealousy became so evident that the **East Side seceded from the village and established ''East Ypsilanti.''** Residents even elected their own President and Board of Trustees. This arrangement could scarcely become permanent, and a movement from both sides was begun for obtaining a City Charter. In 1858, the two sides united and became the City of Ypsilanti. The Charter was properly revised on February 15, 1859.

A Book Review:

''The Railroad Caboose — Its 100 Year History, Legend and Lore''

by William F. Knapke with Freeman Hubbard

Since many Depot Towners have seen the inside of a caboose for the first time in these last two months, we heartily recommend Knapke's fine book. Nearly everyone is familiar with the railroad caboose. Formally, it's the punctuation mark that concludes every freight train — a mobile office for the crew, a lookout post. It is a **van** on the Canadian National, a **cabin car** on the Pennsylvania, a **buggy** on the Boston & Maine, but by whatever name, it remains symbolic of the railroad scene.

The little red frame shanty that trailed faithfully after every string of freight cars has undergone many changes in a hundred years. The box-like shelter which train crews built to shield their cooking fires on spare flat cars in the mid-1800's, the converted box cars with sliding doors introduced around the turn of the century, the cupola-topped wooden crummy popular before World War II, all have given way to more modern and better-equipped vehicles.

Today's caboose, with its sleek bay windows of shatterproof glass, its automatic coil heaters, electric lights, refrigerators, and radio-telephones between locomotive and wayside station, reflect the technological advances being made by North American railroads. The caboose has become merely a rolling office, efficient and functional, rather than the ''home away from home'' that it used to be.

During a century it achieved an individuality unscarred by rolling stock in any other category, freight or passenger. Because a caboose seldom rides any rails but those of its home company, it has a certain uniqueness. Even today more warmth of sentiment attaches to the caboose than any other railroad asset.

The Railroad Caboose is the most distinctive, most comprehensive volume evry built around a piece of railroad rolling stock. Here's the biggest freight-trainload of railroadiana, legend and lore, ever hauled between hard covers. A century of tradition is served up in easy-to-read style with a matchless picture gallery.

Technically, there can be no freight train without a caboose, complete with market lights. And no library of railroad or American history can be called complete without **The Railroad Caboose**, compiled by the nation's oldest and foremost living railroad historians.

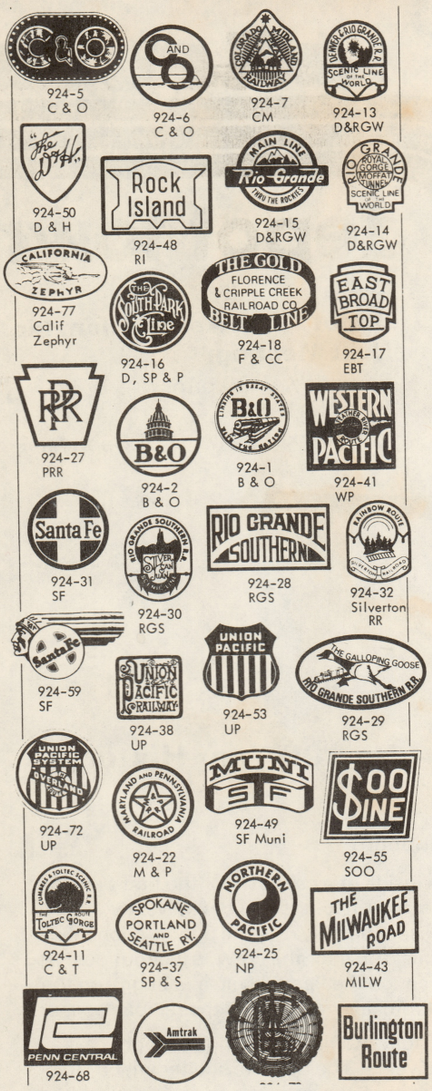
The Railroad Caboose, by William F. Knapke with Freeman Hubbard, Golden West Books, P. O. Box 8136, San Marino, California 91108. (Copy on file in the DTA Caboose).

Meet Boomer

Your railroader in residence tells us that ''Boomers'' were not just ordinary folk who hung around railroad yards, but were actually itinerant railroad employees who moved to whichever yard or line had work at the moment. They were part-time hoboes, those glorious depression-time travelers, and some even fell into the bum-wino category.

The May 26-31 BOOMER DAYS in Depot Town will bring all of these colorful railroad characters into the open once again.

BOOMER DAYS



Caboose Logo Sought

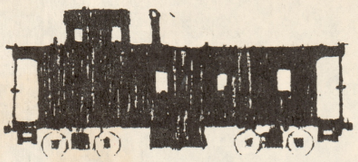
We encourage the many graphic artists in the neighborhood to give us a series of logotypes to choose from for the caboose. Such a logo could include any of the following:

- Depot Town Association, Inc.
- Depot Town Mid-Central Railway and Redevelopment Company (DTM-CRRC)
- 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan
- Farmers' Market
- Art work depicting the Caboose setting

DTA will choose a logo at its April 17 meeting.

Tramp Art

Exhibition to be Featured



(Lynn Radtke of the Sidetrack will exhibit her collection of "Tramp Art" at both the Caboose and Miller Motors' showroom during Boomer Days. One of the most extensive collections in the country, the exhibit will show the kind of folk art common to Boomers across the country at the height of the railroad industry.)

For the thirty years preceding and following the turn of the Twentieth Century, there flourished in America a relatively little-known, but widespread, form of folk art in carved wood called **Tramp Art**. This kind of work was not a spontaneous happening, nor was it an isolated type of rural art. Instead, **Tramp Art** evolved from the European tradition of chip-carving wood for decorative purposes into a folk art that produced in chip-carved and layered cigar-box wood examples of almost all forms, sizes, and shapes of Nineteenth Century decorative accessories and furniture.

Tramp Art is an itinerant's art form; therefore, there are no written records of the carver's work. The gossip and hearsay of this art form became the facts; misconceptions became truths. There were no rules for constructing the pieces; materials were whatever the carver had available; decorations were whatever he could produce or find. Within the context of his own experience and abilities, the carver assimilated the furniture forms and the decorative accessories he saw every day. Then he adapted and translated what he saw using chip carving as his medium. A definition of **Tramp Art** cannot be precise because there is much commingling of wood-carving traditions; but certain characteristics, such as chip carving of the edges of cigar, fruit, or vegetable box wood, which are then layered one upon another, are almost always evident.

The romantic story of the evolution of **Tramp Art** — that of hoboes chip-carving and whittling cigar boxes or scraps of wood into objects in exchange for food, drink, and lodging — is only part of the truth. A hobo was a man without a skill, without responsibility. He was the person who traveled from one public house to another, possibly in search of a day's employment, but actually just to move from one sure place of food and lodging to another. In none of the hobo literature is there a reference to chip-carving cigar boxes or even to wood carving of any sort. In the late Nineteenth Century, there were numerous articles in European and American popular magazines about tramps, wanderers, hoboes, and their type of existence, their means of livelihood, their working and begging. Ways to solve the itinerant's problems were recommended, but there was no mention of how they spent their free time because the hobo's concern for food and lodgin' was paramount. In the last part of the Nineteenth Century Josiah Flynt was the most prolific writer on hobo life. To uncover information about hoboes, he became one himself. Flynt published his story in *Tramping with Tramps, Studies and Sketches of Vagabond Life* in 1899 in New York. Again, there was no mention of the hobo turning to wood carving in his spare time.

Just as there were certain factors that aided the spread of **Tramp Art**, the waning and decline of these factors and the rise of other elements led to a decrease in its popularity. In the first quarter of the Twentieth Century, immigration restrictions began to be imposed. As the men who practiced the chip carving died, few took their place. Increased railroad and water transportion opened up new jobs and offered more stability. The wandering craftsman became fashionable, and it was longer considered effete for men to smoke cigarettes, cigar smoking diminished in popularity; and when cigar smoking decreased, so did the making of cigar boxes. Thus, the raw materials for **Tramp Art** were no longer as abundant. Radio and motion pictures were born and became popular, and there was an increase in the number and kinds of newspapers, magazines, and books available. So it was that mass entertainment helped kill the creative crafts. **Tramp Art** became a thing of the past — to resurface and to be sought out and appreciated for its folk-art qualities only in very recent times.

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depot town

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56 E. Cross – in Ypsilanti's Historical Depot Town
HOURS:
Mon.-Fri. 10a.m. to 1a.m.
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Check out our exciting new menu!